

Spokane Transit Authority
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BOARD OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes for July 16, 2014
Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Amber Waldref, City of Spokane, Board Operations
Committee Chair
Al French, Spokane County, Planning &
Development Committee Chair
Mike Allen, City of Spokane, Performance
Monitoring & External Relations Committee Chair
E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer, Ex-officio

MEMBERS ABSENT

Tom Trulove, City of Cheney, Vice Chair

STAFF PRESENT

Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Steve Doolittle, Director of Human Resources
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning
Lynda Warren, Director of Finance & Information Services
Beth Bousley, Director of Communications & Customer
Service
Susan Millbank, Ombudsman & Accessibility Officer
Jan Watson, Executive Assistant to the CEO & Clerk of the
Authority

GUESTS

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Acting Chair French called the meeting to order at 12:44 p.m. and conducted roll call.

2. APPROVE COMMITTEE AGENDA

Ms. Meyer requested to add a Plaza discussion (Item #7) to the agenda ahead of STA Moving Forward (now Item #8).
The Committee consensus was to include the Plaza discussion.

3. CHAIR'S COMMENTS - None

4. COMMITTEE ACTION/DISCUSSION

a. May 14, 2014 Committee Minutes

Mr. Allen moved approval of the May 14, 2014 minutes and Mr. French seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5. COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS

a. Al French, Planning & Development (P&D)

Mr. Otterstrom said that the committee recommended approval of the Transit Development Plan (TDP). The Central City Line Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Amendment & Advancement of Preliminary Engineering item was presented. A public hearing is scheduled for the July 24 Board meeting. The recommendation to adopt by resolution will occur later at that same meeting.

b. Mike Allen, Performance Monitoring & External Relations (PM&ER)

Mr. Allen said the meeting was cancelled due to a fire alarm and power outage. The State Auditor sent out STA's 2013 Audit results to all Board members. He congratulated STA staff on zero findings for nine years.

Mr. Blaska said that the Tariff Policy for Vanpool and Approval to pay Retainage – Phase 2 Aronson Security Installation will be on the Board consent agenda.

Ms. Warren said the 2014 Triennial Review item will be in Board information. STA had one finding for late preventive maintenance on paratransit vehicles.

6. APPROVAL FOR BOARD MEMBER TRAVEL TO APTA ANNUAL MEETING & EXPO

Ms. Meyer said that Amber Waldref and Tom Trulove would like to attend the APTA Annual Meeting & Expo in Houston, Texas, October 12 – 15.

Mr. Allen moved approval of Amber Waldref and Tom Trulove to attend the APTA Annual Meeting in Houston and Mr. French seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

7. PLAZA – NEW ITEM

Ms. Meyer said that she has learned recently from several sources in the community that there is potential for a formal statement of opposition to the Plaza renovation. These same sources also want the Plaza to relocate out of the downtown core. She suggested that after STA Moving Forward implementation is complete in 2024 there will be an opportunity to consider what STA will do with the current downtown transit center. At that time, downtown partners will be asked to participate and a consultant will be hired to assist in evaluating the options available to STA.

Mr. Allen agreed with the idea, but asked how that would change the short term dialog. He suggested determining a financial impact on STA if the Plaza had to move to a new location and also stated that he thinks that downtown partners will not support the Central City Line unless there is an alternative location for the Plaza.

Ms. Meyer said that looking at service architecture after 2024 is entirely planned on the 2008 decision to stay at the Plaza. Opponents of the Plaza have not come up with a solution.

Discussion ensued regarding 2025 & the Plaza. Alternatives were discussed.

Ms. Meyer said that STA would commit to doing an analysis and engaging public input towards a solution.

Mr. French suggested two options. The first option would be for opponents of the Plaza to fund a move to a new location. The second option would include a strategy to look at service architecture after 2024.

Mr. Allen agreed on the approach. If the Plaza relocated, there should be no impact on service.

Discussion ensued regarding route changes and costs if the Plaza had to relocate.

Mr. French asked about destination trips to the Plaza.

Ms. Waldref arrived at 1:11 p.m.

Mr. Blaska said it was difficult to come up with a finite number from the assessment in the Plaza survey because of the way the question was asked, “What is downtown”. The nature of the flow of traffic in Spokane is through the downtown core.

Mr. French said there is economic value to the businesses in the downtown area when people who use transit go into the downtown core. That value needs to be quantified.

Ms. Meyer said that included in the STA Moving Forward plan is more direct connectivity from North to South with fewer routes serving the Plaza. The Plaza will operate differently in 2025 than it does now. Serving downtown is extremely important.

Mr. Allen said some areas around the Plaza are sketchy. Some downtown partners feel that that aspect is hurting commerce more than helping.

Mr. French said the negative aspect is clearly visible. The economic value is a positive. Does it outweigh the negative?

He said the function of the Plaza would relocate, not the Plaza itself. If the Plaza were renovated, it would benefit the entire downtown group.

Mr. Blaska said that STA has been following the adopted downtown plan for the last eight years. If some downtown partners want STA to relocate, it needs to be articulated. If the Plaza had to relocate now, the STA Moving Forward effort would stop.

Ms. Waldref commented that all the High Performance Transit (HPT) routes would have to change.

Mr. French reviewed the two options; determining the relocation costs and evaluating options after 2024.

Mr. Otterstrom said that since the 1890’s the transit hub was Riverside & Howard. For the function to remain the same, the hub has to be between Washington & Monroe and the Railroad tracks & Riverfront Park. The hub also needs to intersect the Central City Line. The core of downtown Spokane is square and Seattle is linear. In Seattle, bus riders are standing in doorways.

Ms. Waldref said that all the downtown plans assume the Plaza will be in its current location until 2025.

Mr. Blaska said that as the downtown grows there will need to be an alternative in addition to the Plaza.

Mr. Allen said that a formal position is needed from the opponents of the Plaza.

Ms. Waldref suggested that opponents submit their ideas to update the downtown plan and then that plan would move through the approval process.

Mr. French said that this plan maintains a neutral revenue position for the agency, but lays out the steps.

Mr. Allen said there are two options; engage with STA in the 2025 vision and work through the steps or if opponents want the Plaza relocated prior to 2025 then list all the pieces that have to fall in place.

Mr. Otterstrom commented that it is like 2025 now or later. There will be a big study involved either way.

Ms. Waldref said that if opponents want to accelerate STA's plans, those individuals would need to determine the steps.

Mr. Otterstrom said that operational modeling could cost anywhere from \$500K to \$1.5M on top of public outreach and scheduling changes.

Mr. Blaska said the emphasis should be on the process.

Mr. Allen said that it should include a dollar value.

Mr. Otterstrom said that planning would have to take place first to determine costs.

Mr. Allen said the commitment for the STA Board is to maintain current service levels and hopefully increase service over the next five to ten years. Downtown is an important partner. There are two options.

Ms. Waldref asked for clarification regarding the conversation in the community.

Mr. Allen said some individuals do not want the Plaza renovated, they would like the dollars spent to remodel the intermodal center.

Ms. Meyer suggested STA draft a letter that would include the process to change the downtown plan, time for analysis and approximate costs.

Mr. French suggested a dollar range be included.

Ms. Meyer said the Mayor's office has requested a copy of the Nelson Nygaard study from 2008.

Mr. Blaska commented that the plans for renovating the Plaza only improve the facility and asked why anyone would turn down a \$4M investment in downtown. All of STA's plans are part of the long term plan and vision. As a public agency, STA will do whatever the community decides.

Mr. Allen agreed. The plan was well done.

Ms. Waldref said that because of new members on the council, the letter should include the history and the community's support of transit.

The committee agreed that the entire Board should be involved in this discussion.

Mr. French asked about the level of urgency for the letter. He suggested a Board study session to discuss and draft a letter.

A Board study session was suggested following the regular Board meeting on July 24.

Ms. Meyer said that much of the downtown support for the Plaza remodel had to do with the meeting rooms on the second floor. The Phase I remodel does not include the meeting rooms. The remodel cost is \$1.13M for the meeting rooms and creating a shell for that space.

Mr. Allen said it is a beautiful location and it would benefit STA if it was generating revenue.

Mr. Otterstrom said it would benefit STA if the meeting room remodel occurred at the same time as Phase I, because for one reason, the contractors will already be on site.

Mr. Allen said he prefers to do both at the same time.

Ms. Waldref agreed and said that formal meeting space is needed.

A discussion ensued regarding vendors in the retail space.

The committee agreed by consensus to plan to complete the second floor remodel at the same time as the Phase I remodel and seek proposals for the rotunda space and include the item on the July 24 Board agenda.

Mr. Otterstrom said that the current Plaza retail value is low due to its configuration only as a waiting area for transit.

8. STA MOVING FORWARD (INCLUDING CENTRAL CITY LINE)

Ms. Meyer said that the meeting with John Witmer, Community Planner, and Rich Krochalis, Regional Administrator, both from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Seattle office was very productive. The meeting discussed the Central City Line (CCL) and potential application for federal funding towards the capital costs.

Mr. Otterstrom discussed the CCL key decision points and milestones that need to occur prior to STA's submission of a Small Starts funding packet. After the packet is submitted a recommendation for Federal Funding will occur. Prior to the packet being submitted, there will be Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Amendment planning. Parallel to the LPA Amendment planning is a request to enter project development to FTA. The consultants, along with FTA, have indicated that the request to enter project development should occur by September 10th. This request in the form of a letter should include the project, the funding for project development and preliminary engineering. By making the request at this time it allows STA to be in the queue but does not commit FTA to fund the project. However, any expenses can count toward the local funding match. It is difficult to move forward without the Federal funding in place, but on the other hand, the Federal funding criteria wants to see that local funding has been committed.

Mr. French said that is consistent with what he was told from FTA officials also.

Mr. Allen expressed concern about the public support to set dollars aside for the CCL when there is no definitive project end.

Mr. Allen asked about the free bus ride day.

Ms. Bousley said that STA is considering a day in conjunction with the service change in September.

Mr. Allen suggested a unique bus to use on the Central City Line for a week. The ride should be free.

Ms. Meyer said that Scenario B would include a new route with increased frequency and shelters.

Ms. Waldref asked at what point does the decision need to be made between Scenario A or B.

Ms. Meyer said STA would know that answer by 2017.

Mr. Allen said that he is not 100% convinced that the route is necessary. The push for the CCL is that it is a permanent system and will enhance investment on the corridor. He said that increased frequency means increased ridership.

Ms. Waldref asked if this new plan will be included in STA Moving Forward.

Ms. Meyer said it will.

Ms. Waldref asked about the new cost estimates for the alternatives to propulsion on the CCL and if the presentation given to the Planning & Development Committee could be sent out to Board members separately from the Board packet.

Mr. French asked about WAVE technology.

Ms. Meyer said the FTA Research Department has been funding this technology for three to four years. The company was spun out of Utah State University into a private company. The technology has been partly funded by FTA and venture capitals. She will follow up with FTA regarding their assessment of WAVE and find out if other technology is on the horizon that they are currently funding or considering to fund.

Mr. Otterstrom said that the item *CCL: Request to FTA to enter Project Development* will be on the Board agenda July 24.

Ms. Meyer said it will be an action item for the Board.

9. BOARD OF DIRECTORS AGENDA: JULY 24, 2014 – REVIEW

All committee members agreed with the agenda.

10. CEO REPORT - No report

11. NEW BUSINESS - None

12. ADJOURN

Chair Waldref moved to adjourn the meeting and all members approved. With there being no further business to come before the Committee, Chair Waldref adjourned the meeting at 2:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Merilee Robar
Executive Assistant to the Director of Finance & Information Services